

**Susan McKenzie MS.**

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Specializing in issues of Gay, Lesbian,  
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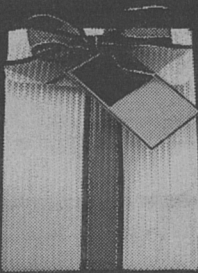
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**arts**

**FILM:  
Young Women  
In Love**

BY EUAN BEAR

**My Summer of Love**  
Natalie Press, Emily  
Blunt, Paddy Considine  
Directed by Pawel  
Pawlikowski

The friend I had bumped into at the theatre told me later that *My Summer of Love* "certainly wasn't anything like I was expecting." Teenage girls from different backgrounds meet one summer, bond in their isolation and alienation across class lines, and magic happens. Well, yes and no.

It's not exactly a coming-of-age story. It's not a simple teenage romance (not that teenage romance is ever as simple as patronizing adults like to think). And it's not in the least bit pornographic, even with a male director framing the shots (although this male director, Pawel Pawlikowski, has made a name for himself for his "outsider" points of view).

From the first scene, there's the engineless scooter working-class "Mona" Lisa (Natalie Press) rides down a dusty Yorkshire road. And the first interaction she has with Tamsin (Emily Blunt) is looking up from flat on the ground to the rich girl's horse-back height.

There's Mona's ex-con brother Phil (Paddy Considine) pouring the house stock of booze down the drain of their late mother's pub as, in an excess of born-again zeal, he pursues his vision of turning the pub into a spiritual center for Christians to "bring hope back into this valley."

The sun pours down like magic molten gold on gorse- and heather-covered hills, one of which will be the site of the massive wood and iron cross Phil is building. The honeyed glow halos red-haired Mona and bur-nishes even Tamsin's brunette locks.

Tamsin has been suspended from her boarding school, and is thus home for an indeterminate period. Mona apparently has left school or is on summer vac. Parents are either dead (Mona) or missing in action (Tamsin). Not much impinges on the intensity of their self-focused world. Their bond grows when Tamsin takes Mona in a taxi to see where her father's car is parked outside the home of his assistant (though she seems more offended that the assistant is a blowsy broad than that her dad is betraying his marital vows to

script, but encouraged collaboration and improvisation. Blunt said in an interview on National Public Radio that Pawlikowski asked her what else she did, and then incorporated her admitted cello playing into one scene. The script is loosely based on a novel by Helen Cross, although the novel includes murder and a miner's strike (which would explain the desperate need to "bring hope back into the valley" via the seductive dream of a personal god who rewards goodness).

Mona has dreams, lofty and less so, and perhaps it's a clue that we never hear Tamsin's. Tamsin has money, with which she buys an engine for Mona's scooter, freeing them both, at least temporarily. Tamsin is a mirror reflecting the self-delusions of others, catching them at it and laughing while excusing herself as a "fantasist."

*My Summer of Love* is an achingly beautiful film, gold over



her mother, who is traveling).

Mona dashes up to the car, picks up a garden gnome and smashes the driver's side window, exacting an impulsive vengeance on Tamsin's behalf, impinging on the oblivious adult. Later Tamsin returns the favor, embarrassing Mona's married ex-boyfriend in public and telling his wife about the affair. But so isolated are the two that there are no consequences for either action.

Press and Blunt are novices in the film world, but there is definitely chemistry between them. Pawlikowski gave all the actors an outline of the major points of the

life's gritty gravel, and guess which one prevails? It's a movie about acting and surface and seeming versus passion and commitment and truth. It's a film worth seeing when it arrives at the Savoy this fall or when it comes out in DVD, although, unless you have a large-screen home-theater, the impact of the countryside will be diminished.

*My Summer of Love* will remind you of your first love, and how hard it is to find someone worthy of your trust, and how easy it is to break someone's heart. It will remind you of how, afterward, you moved on. ▼